

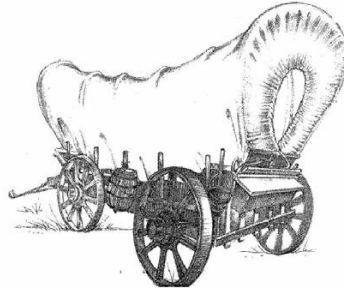
Fort Davis

National Historic Site

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Curriculum Materials Grades 9-12 Student Activity: Traveling a “superhighway” of the 1800s



Wagon Road from San Antonio to El Paso

Excerpted from Randolph B. Marcy, The Prairie Traveler: A Handbook for Overland Expeditions (New York, 1859).

Miles	San Antonio to
6.41	Leona
18.12	Castroville
11.0	Hondo
14.28	Rio Seco
12.56	Sabinal
13.46	Rio Frio
15.12	Nueces
10.27	Turkey Creek
15.33	Elm Creek – All good camps, with abundance of wood, water, and grass. Country mostly settled, and the road very good, except in wet weather, from San Antonio to Elm Creek.
7.0	Fort Clark – Good grass, wood, and water
7.0	Piedra Pinta – Good Grass, wood, and water.
8.86	Maverick’s Creek- Good grass, wood, and water.
12.61	San Felipe – Good grass, wood, and water.
10.22	Devil’s River – Good camp. The only water between Devil’s River and Live Oak Creek is at Howard’s Springs. The road is very rough in places.
44.0	Howard’s Springs – Grass scarce; water plenty in winter; wood plenty.
30.44	Live Oak Creek – Good water and grass. The road passes within 1 ½ miles of Fort Lancaster.
7.29	Crossing of Pecos River – Bad water and bad camp. The water of the Pecos can be used.
5.47	Las Moras – Good water, grass, and wood.
32.85	Camp on the Pecos River. Wood and grass scarce.
16.26	Escondido Creek – At the crossing. Water good; little grass.

8.76	Escondido Spring – Grass and water good; little grass.
19.40	Comanche Creek – Grass and water good; no wood.
8.87	Leon Springs – Grass and water good; no wood.
33.86	Barela Spring – Grass and water good; wood plenty.
28.0	Fort Davis- Good camp. From Fort Davis to Eagle Springs there is an ascent, and one of the very best roads.
18.42	Barrel Springs – Water good; grass and wood fair.
13.58	Dead Man’s Hole – Good wood & water; grass scarce.
32.83	Van Horne’s Wells. No grass or wood but they will be found 2 miles back.
19.74	Eagle Springs – Grass and wood poor; water about half a mile from camp in narrow canon.
32.03	Mouth of Canon “de los Camenos” – The road is rather rough. From here to Fort Bliss, opposite El Paso, the road runs near the river, and camps may be made anywhere. The wood, water, and grass are good at all points.
61.13	San Eluzario – Mexican town
9.25	Socorro – Mexican town
15.0	Fort Bliss at El Paso – United States military post and Mexican town.

Total Distance from San Antonio to El Paso, 654.27 miles

Journal of Harriet Bunyard, 1869

The following excerpts were taken from the journal of Harriet Bunyard. “Hattie” was 19 years old when her family, relatives, and others headed to California from Collin County, north of Dallas, Texas. (For complete diary, see *Women’s Overland Diaries from the Huntington Library*, Sandra Myres, ed., 1980). At Fort Concho, present-day San Angelo, the Bunyard wagon train joined the San Antonio-El Paso Road (see map, last page) and headed west to California.

Before you read ahead, take a moment with your partner to imagine what it would have been like to travel during this time period. What would you have been able to take with you? What would you have to leave behind? Who were you probably traveling with? There were no motels, no paper products, no hot showers with running water. Why were you making this journey? Once you have brainstormed some ideas, take a moment to write a paragraph describing what your journey would have been like before you read the passages.

May 3rd, 1869

All in fine spirits. Started early, traveled 15 miles. Crossed the East Fork of the Trinity and Little Elm. Had no trouble. Camped on a high, beautiful prairie. Passed over a broken, hilly country. Two men were hung near the camp the evening previous and were said to be still hanging. [They were] hung for stealing.

Denton County, May 7th

Two more young men joined the train making 22. Crossed Clear Creek. Passed two vacant houses. Suppose the Indians was the cause of them being left. Came to Denton Creek. There had a little bad luck. Wagon turned over, no serious damage done. Went 2 miles farther and camped by a little branch. Here the water falls 15 feet from beautiful shell rock. Trees growing

down there with their tops just even with the level of the land. Such a good place for Indians to hide. Passed three vacant houses. They look very desolate. The country has a wild appearance.



Pioneers

May 16th Sabbath evening.

We have travailed about 15 miles today. Passed through Jacksborro and over the rockiest road that I ever saw. It is quite a romantic looking country. High hills as far as I can see covered with small timber and large rocks...

June 4th.

Some stock missing this morning. Moved 4 miles, crossing the Colorado River. Camped on the west side. It is a very pretty stream. No timber on the banks as far as I can see....

June 8th

Camped again near the Conchio [Concho River]. Been washing and rearranging things generally. Will leave here this evening and make a short drive in order to reach the desert of the river in two more days. Here we found another large, cold spring surrounded with willow trees... The cattle got scared last night and stampeded but not very bad...they did not all run off. Quite an excitement was raised in camps. We did not know but what the Indians were about....[Soon after this, at Fort Concho, the

wagon train joined the San Antonio-El Paso Road.]

June 19th

Drove over nice road and passed by some beautiful mountains. Are camped near a stage stand where is a Negro guard and one white man there. We get water out of a very good spring.

June 28th

There has been a great deal of rain through this country which makes the range fine. This pass through these mountains is called Wild Rose Gap and it is very appropriate name as there are so many wild roses in the little vallies.

June 29th

Passed through Fort Davis. It is a pretty little place by the side of the mountains. The valley is wide here and the mountains small. Here are found vegetables. Very high, roasting ears one dollar and 50 cents per dozen, butter one dollar per pound, eggs the same per dozen. This is a beautiful valley. We have a delightful camping place tonight. There is such a nice spring here and splendid water in abundance running out of the mountain. 9 miles from Fort Davis. Several full stores here. Some white people and Mexicans and Negroes. There are 400 soldiers here. They played their band as we passed the fort.



Fort Davis, Texas

Traveling a "superhighway" of the 1800s – The San Antonio-El Paso Road to California

Student_____ Date_____

Using the *1859 Table of Distances*, passages from *Harriet Bunyard's 1869 Journal*, and the map, answer the following questions. You will use the answers to these questions to then write a constructed response.

1. Both of the documents are primary sources but they are very different. What are some of the differences between the two documents? Which of the documents do you feel gives you more information? Why?
2. Both the table of distances and the writings of Harriet Bunyard mention natural resources. What is specifically mentioned and why? What were the consequences of running out of these resources? What about the impact of too many people/pioneers using the same camps—and why might this be more catastrophic the farther west they went?
3. How long was the San Antonio-El Paso Road? Harriet's wagon train didn't arrive in El Paso/Franklin until July 19—imagine a trip from Dallas to El Paso or beyond today, by comparison. (Her wagon train didn't arrive in California--Los Angeles County--until late October.)
4. Looking at the names of the various places why do you think stops were placed where they were? Explain your answer.
5. What else do the names imply about the area and who resided there?
6. According to Harriet Bunyard, why are the houses abandoned?
7. What do you think Harriet Bunyard's perspective of Indians, African Americans, and Mexicans was? Why is this relevant?
8. Explain how the railroads changed travel across the American West.

Constructed Response:

It is obvious from both the writings of Harriet Bunyard and the Table of Distances that wagon travel was very difficult and dangerous. In two paragraphs, explain some of the dangers that faced travelers. In your response, you incorporate at least 4 citations from the documents and explain their relevance.

